

Statement of Representative Lois Capps (CA-24)
House Natural Resources Committee – Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Legislative Hearing
H.R. 3565 California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act
May 12, 2016

Thank you, Chairman McClintock and Ranking Member Tsongas, for scheduling this hearing and for providing me with the opportunity to speak on H.R. 3565, the California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act. I, along with Representatives Anna Eshoo and Jared Huffman, introduced this bill on September 18, 2015; Senators Boxer and Feinstein introduced similar legislation in the Senate, S. 1971, last year as well. This bill represents the culmination of years of stakeholder and constituent engagement and reflects the shared goal of providing greater access to one of our Nation's greatest treasures: the California Coastal National Monument. H.R. 3565 would expand the existing Monument to include four additional on shore parcels of land across three counties, as well as remove current exemptions for a number of rocks and islands along the coast of Orange County, a provision that is also in Representative Rohrabacher's bill, H.R. 4233.

The California Coastal National Monument was first designated in 2000 by President Clinton in order to highlight and protect the ecological, scenic, and scientific splendors along the coast of California. The Monument encompasses over 1,000 offshore acres including over 20,000 islands, rocks, exposed reefs, and pinnacles along the coast of California, which provide important coastal habitat for the plants and animals that depend on these features as well as recreation and tourism opportunities. Each of these offshore sites is exposed above mean high tide and is within 12 miles of the shoreline. Many of these locations are home to the dramatic vistas that make the California coast so visually striking.

In March 2014, President Obama expanded the Monument to include an onshore parcel in Mendocino County, the Point Arena-Stornetta Public Lands. As described in his proclamation, the lands included in this addition "encompass a windswept landscape of dramatic coastal beauty and significant scientific importance." Importantly, this addition also provides onshore access for visitors to directly engage with the Monument.

In recognizing that the California Coastal National Monument is one of the most viewed, but least recognized, national monuments, H.R. 3565 is designed to provide greater access to the Monument through the inclusion of onshore parcels that are already managed by the Bureau of Land Management throughout the state. Each of the four parcels included represent important ecological, scenic, and historic sites along the coast. Adding these sites has broad support from individuals who reside in these regions and across the state. Expanding the Monument to include onshore lands will provide greater visibility to the Monument, allow residents and visitors alike to visit and engage with the Monument, and be a boon to local economies and businesses that are supported by the tourism and recreation industries.

H.R. 3565 includes four onshore parcels: two, Trinidad Head and Lighthouse Ranch, are located in Humboldt County. One is in Santa Cruz County, the Cotoni [*pronounced cho-TONY*] -Coast Dairies Public Land, and in my district, San Luis Obispo County is home to the Piedras Blancas

Light Station Outstanding Natural Area. Each of these locations has unique ecological and historical heritage, and all four of these sites would significantly promote the ideals of protecting and conserving the California coast for current and future generations, while providing greater visibility and accessibility to the Monument.

I would like to take the time to focus on the Piedras Blancas Light Station, the parcel of land that would be added to the Monument in the 24th Congressional District, which I represent. Efforts to further protect this historic point of land have been a long-lived, grassroots campaign. The light station's history dates back to 1875 when it was first illuminated. Over the years, it has provided safe navigation along the Central Coast, with lighthouse operations, albeit in a different format, still continuing today. While the lighthouse is a historic treasure in and of itself, the point also boasts incredible native plant and animal diversity both onshore and on several islands—which are already a part of the Monument—just offshore. This area includes fantastic coastal vistas and a large array of marine wildlife, including the migration routes for endangered whale species and the iconic elephant seal.

Recognizing the historical and ecological importance of Piedras Blancas, local residents banded together to increase awareness about this treasured landscape and the need to protect it. One way they did so was to raise money to support its preservation through the “Pennies for Piedras” campaign between 2005 and 2007 that was initiated by a local elementary classroom. These students spurred the ongoing movement, which led to my legislation to designate the Piedras Blancas Light Station as an Outstanding Natural Area. It was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2008. While status as an Outstanding Natural Area has afforded the Point with many protections, inclusion within the California Coastal National Monument would significantly enhance the visibility and access to this coastal treasure. In addition, inclusion of the Piedras in the Monument would provide for an ideal point for visitors to interface with and view the existing offshore portions of the Monument. These simultaneous benefits are the epitome of a win-win solution.

While Piedras Blancas is in my district, the three other parcels listed in this bill would also enhance the Monument, both on- and offshore. For example, incorporation of the Cotoni-Coast Dairies parcel in Congresswoman Eshoo's Congressional district would permanently protect 5,800 acres of coastal lands for the benefit of current and future generations. This parcel stretches from Highway 1 along the coast to the ridge of the Santa Cruz Mountains, containing six watersheds, several endangered species, a 500 acre redwood forest, and culturally important Native American archeological sites. The name Cotoni-Coast Dairies honors the native people who historically inhabited the land, as well as its more modern history as a dairy. After the dairy folded in the 1950s, development of luxury homes and a nuclear power plant were proposed. However, local efforts led to the acquisition of the ranch by the Save the Redwoods League in 1998. It was subsequently donated to BLM in 2014.

The two parcels within Congressman Huffman's district are similarly blessed with natural and historical significance. Both sites commemorate the region's storied history and encompass the breathtaking beauty of coastal northern California. Trinidad Head is a 60 acre parcel with a spectacular promontory overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Currently managed by BLM in cooperation with local governments and tribes, Trinidad Head has unique geological, biological,

and cultural significance to local communities. Lighthouse Ranch is an eight acre bluff with stunning views of the Eel River Delta. Lighthouse Ranch provides unparalleled recreational opportunities attracting hikers, picnickers, and sightseers from all over California and the West who come to enjoy this amazing property.

The California Coastal National Monument provides protection for the entire California coast. The islands, rocks, and existing onshore lands encompass the historic and natural importance of this incomparable treasure. H.R. 3565 is the logical next step to ensure that visitors and residents can access and engage with the monument for all current and future generations. On behalf of the broad coalition of supporters back home, I appreciate your leadership in holding this hearing, and I look forward to working with you on this important legislation.